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The slumping economy is not just affecting those with a roof over their heads.

Officials of PADS, Lake County's homeless shelter, are facing a severe financial crisis and are encouraging residents to make contributions.

At the PADS Crisis Service location Tuesday in North Chicago, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, State Sen. Susan Garrett, State Rep. Karen May and Director of Lake County Health Department Irene Piece were among the elected officials to show their support for the organization.

The mayors of North Chicago and Waukegan, as well as Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran and the supervisors from West Deerfield, Shields and Waukegan townships, also were present.

"Our goal was to bring together all the leaders of Lake County to fully understand the need to reach out and raise funds for the increasing homeless population that confronts Lake County," said Garrett of Lake Forest.

"In order to help our homeless population, we're reaching out to our churches, foundations and private individuals to make a contribution of any size," she added.

Mortgage problems

Because of the economy, mortgage foreclosures and high gas prices, the number of homeless people has increased in the past year, leaving PADS with a dramatic shortfall in funding.

"Our numbers are increasing greatly. Lots of families are touched by mortgage foreclosures because their landlords have been foreclosed, so the renters have to move out," said PADS Director Cathy Curran.

PADS needs to cover a shortfall of \$360,000 by Sept. 1, of which \$150,000 must be received by June 30.

"We anticipate that in our coming fiscal year, which begins July 1, we'll need help," Curran said. "We're hoping that we have enough money from private donors and foundations and the government to continue our programs."

PADS is open all year and helps an average of 75 people each day, but more people are in need of help starting in October. The homeless shelter provides a variety of programs, including Street Outreach, PADS Day Resource Center, PADS Emergency Shelter, Family Center and New Beginnings for Seniors.

From June 2007 through May, PADS saw a 17 percent increase from the previous year in new clients and a 48 percent increase in children. Although the number of veterans (11 percent) was down last year, PADS expects the number to rise as veterans return from the wars.

"As the economy spirals and gas prices go up, PADS continues to see an increase in families who have nowhere to go but PADS shelters," Garrett said.

PADS board members said they will find a solution to solve the financial crisis, but will have to be creative.

Board Member Robert Braash said the number of homeless people has increased in overnight shelters and at two programs for 42 women and children and 10 senior men in Waukegan.

"We may have to provide less support and employ less people, but the beauty of PADS is we've

never turned anybody away, nor do we intend to," Braash said.

To make a contribution to PADS, visit <http://www.lakecountypads.org/>.